

Message Text

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12

ACTION EA-06

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NSC-05 NSCE-00 /034 W

----- 037955

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3301

INFO COMUSSAG NKP THAILAND

CINCPAC HONOLULU

COMIPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 2443

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS VS

SUBJECT: MR 3 COMMANDER'S OUTLOOK ON THE MILITARY SITUATION

FOLLOWING TEL SENT ACTION SAIGON MAR 3, H/W REPEATED TO YOU. QTE:

C O N F I D E N T I A L BIEN HOA 124

LIMDIS

FOR THE CHARGE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, VS

SUBJ: MR3 COMMANDER'S OUTLOOK ON THE MILITARY SITUATION

1. THE MR3 COMMANDER, LTG TOAN, REFLECTED A REMARKABLY
OPTIMISTIC OUTLOOK ON THE MILITARY SITUATION IN MR3
DURING OUR PRIVATE CONVERSATION FOLLOWING THE MR3 WEEKLY
BRIEFING MAR 3. HE REVIEWED THE STEPS HE HAS TAKEN TO
SEIZE THE INITIATIVE WITH HIS RECONNAISSANCE-IN-FORCE
OPERATIONS IN TAY NINH, IN BINH DUONG, AND IN LONG KHANH,
AND SAID HE BELIEVES HE HAS THE NVA/VS SUFFICIENTLY OFF-
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BALANCE TO HAVE UPSET THEIR PLANS AND TIMETABLE FOR THE

SPRING OFFENSIVE. WHEN I ASKED WHEN HE NOW THOUGHT THE NVA/VC WOULD LAUNCH THE SECOND PHASE OF THE DRY SEASON CAMPAIGN,(HE SAID HE WAS NOT SURE THE OTHER SIDE WOULD BE ABLE TO MOUNT SUCH AN OFFENSIVE IN THE COMING MONTHS. TOAN SAID THAT HE WAS PERHAPS TOO OPTIMISTIC BUT THAT HIS EXPERIENCE THUS FAR HAS BEEN THAT THE NVA/VC DO NOT MOUNT MAJOR OFFENSIVE ACTIONS WHEN THEY ARE UNDER PRESSURE. HE INTENDS TO KEEP THEM UNDER PRESSURE ON ALL FRONTS. TOAN SAID THAT "PEOPLE IN SAIGON" WORRY TOO MUCH. HE HIMSELF BELIEVES THE SITUATION IN MR3 TO BE WELL IN HAND. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT IF, HOWEVER, THE NVA/VC MOUNTS A STRONG ATTACK HE WILL WELCOME IT AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO DESTROY THE ENEMY. FROWNING, HE SAID THE 25TH DIV HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO FIND ANY HEAVY CONCENTRATIONS OF NVA FORCES AROUND BA DEN MOUNTAIN DURING THE PAST MONTH'S OPERATIONS. HE WOULD LIKE FOR THE NVA TO SHOW THEMSELVES AS HE BELIEVES HIS FORCES TO BE SUPERIOR. THIS OPTIMISM WAS GIVEN SUBSTANCE IN GEN TOAN'S DECISION LAST WEEK TO REDUCE THE ALERT FOR MR3 HQ FROM 100 PERCENT TO 50 PERCENT, THUS PERMITTING STAFF MEMBERS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN SEVERAL MONTHS TO SPEND EVERY OTHER NIGHT WITH THEIR FAMILIES.

2. DURING THE CONVERSATION TOAN SAID THAT HE WILL CONTINUE TO PRESS THE NVA ON THE WEST SIDE OF BA DEN MOUNTAIN IN TAY NINH PROVINCE AND HOPES TO PUSH THEM BACK NORTHWARD (I.E. NORTHEASTWARD FROM BA DEN). IF HE SUCCEEDS IN DOING SO, HE WILL THEN SEND 25TH DIV FORCES BACK EASTWARD ON THE NORTH SIDE OF BA DEN MOUNTAIN TO RELIEVE PRESSURE NORTHEAST OF TAY NINH CITY AND THE MOUNTAIN.

3. TOAN HAS ALSO ORDERED GEN VY AND THE 5TH ARVN DIV TO CONTINUE OPERATIONS NORTH OF LAI KHE AND OPEN ROUTE 13 TO THE CHON THANH ENCLAVE IF POSSIBLE. RANGERS PUSHING SOUTHWARD ON 13 FROM CHON THANH HAVE REACHED A POINT NEAR THE BINH LONG/ BINH DUONG PROVINCE BORDER WHILE 5TH DIV UNITS PUSHING NORTHWARD FROM LAI KHE ARE AT ABOUT THE 46TH EAST-WEST COORDINATE LINE, THUS LEAVING A DISTANCE OF ONLY ABOUT 9 KMS BETWEEN THE TWO GVN FORCES. TOAN SAID THAT IF HE CAN OPEN THE ROAD TO CHON THONH, HE THEN WANTS TO STRIKE WESTWARD FROM CHON THANH TOWARD MINH THANH PLANTATION AREA WHICH IS USED AS A MAIN OPERATIONAL BASE AREA BY THE NVA THUS STRIKING THE NVA FROM THE REAR.

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4. IN THE EASTERN AREA, THE 52ND AND 43RD REGTS OF THE 18TH DIV IN OPERATIONS STILL IN PROGRESS HAVE ROUTED OUT THE VC XUAN LOC DISTRICT HQ AND VARIOUS TROOP ELEMENTS FROM A SECRET BASE AREA NORTHEAST OF XUAN LOC IN LONG KHANH PROVINCE. BG DAO, 18TH DIV COMMANDER, DESCRIBED THESE OPERATIONS TO ME WHEN I SAW HIM YESTERDAY IN XUAN LOC. HE SAID THAT SOME ELEMENTS OF THE 274TH NVA REGT HAD PROBABLY BEEN RESTING IN THAT AREA

BUT CONTACTS THUS FAR HAD MAINLY BEEN WITH LOCAL FORCES. THE OPERATION WAS SUCCESSFUL IN ITS DISCOVERY AND DESTRUCTION OF A MAIN NVA/VC BASE AREA JUST NORTHEAST OF THE PROVINCIAL CAPITAL. DAO TOLD ME YESTERDAY THAT HE EXPECTED THE 6TH DIV IN THE EASTERN AREA (I.E., THE 33RD AND 274TH NVA REGTS PLUS A NEW UNIDENTIFIED REGT IN THE AREA) TO LAUNCH A NEW OFFENSIVE IN LONG KHANH AND BINH TUY AINHLST ROUTE 1, RESETTLEMENT AREAS AND HOAI DUC WITHIN THE NEXT 10 DAYS. WHEN I MENTIONED THIS TO GEN TOAN HE CALMLY REPLIED, "IN THAT CASE GEN DAO SHOULD STRIKE THE NVA FORCES FIRST." TOAN DID NOT MENTION ANY PLANN DESCRIBED IN OTHER REPORTING, TO USE THE 52ND AND 43RD REGTS IN TAY NINH.

5. WE ARE REPORTING SEPARATELY THE HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL OPERATION MARCH 1 AND 2 NORTHWEST OF BIEN HOA IN WHICH PENETRATION OF AN OLD SAPPER BASE ARE BQ GVN FORCES RESULTED IN 76 SAPPERS KIA AND RECOVERY OF A LARGE QUANTITY OF ARMAMENTS WITH LOSSES OF ONLY 11 WIA AMONG GVN FORCES. PETERS UNQTE
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